



News Release

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

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AFA chapter kicks off, Eberhart reflects on 9/11

CHARLESTON AIR FORCE BASE, S.C. – More than 300 people turned out to hear Gen. Ralph “Ed” Eberhart, commander-in-chief of U.S. Space Command and North American Aerospace Defense Command, speak at the kickoff meeting of the Charleston chapter of the Air Force Association Feb. 6 in the Charleston Club.

The meeting inducted the new Charleston chapter president, Col. Dave Snodgrass, 437th Support Group commander; vice president Col. James Joyce, 315th Logistics Group commander; vice president of communications Col. John Hill, 437th Medical Group commander; treasurer George Porcher and secretary 2nd Lt. Sara Fisher, 437th Security Forces Squadron. The kickoff marked the first meeting of Charleston AFA members since 1999.

State AFA Chapter president Roger Rucker was ecstatic about the turnout for the kickoff meeting and mentioned to the crowd that the Charleston area has almost 700 members in the AFA, making it the largest chapter in the state. “When I took over president, my number one goal was to get the Charleston chapter back up and operating again,” Rucker said. During the meeting, Rucker also presented awards to past chapter presidents Bob Strobel and Henry Scott for their efforts.

“One of our primary goals of AFA is to educate members of congress and those at the local level about the military,” said Rucker. He added the AFA works hard on behalf of Air Force members to preserve benefits and advocate the effective use of airpower.

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No stranger to South Carolina after serving three years as the wing commander at Shaw AFB, Eberhart added his praise for the AFA. "AFA is older than the Air Force and is the largest such organization of its type," he said. He added that many of the pay raises and new weapons systems would not have happened without AFA support.

Eberhart praised Team Charleston for many accomplishments with the C-17. "The nation and the world have been watching and the C-17 has set new records," he said. "We could not do what we've been doing without you and the C-17." He reflected on how the incidents of Sept. 11 have altered our view on terrorists.

"In the 1990's, we were appeasing terrorists. Winston Churchill once said appeasement is feeding the alligator and hoping that he will eat you last. That is what happened in the 1930's (World War II) and that is what happened in the 1990's," he said. "But in both cases, this nation, this sleeping giant was awakened. The arsenal of democracy was unleashed."

"We decided to protect the skies of this nation and would not let that happen again. We are going to seek out terrorist and those that harbor them, even if they are a nation state," he said. "It's like a tree. We are not going to go out there and top it or cut it off at its trunk, but rather we're going to pull it out by its roots. We will not tolerate terrorism."

"We have had continuous air patrols over Washington D.C and New York and other population and key infrastructure areas. We have protected the shuttle launch, the Superbowl and we're about to protect the Olympics. This isn't the right way to do this mission. The right way to do this is with beefed up security at our airports, air marshals and locked cockpit doors. It's clear that passengers will not put up with unruly passengers anymore."

As the visions of 9/11 fade, he worried that some will lose their will for the war against terrorism over time. "It takes organizations like the AFA, civic leaders and those of us in uniform to remind the public how important this war on terrorism is," he said. "You'll have to remind yourself and your children as you say goodbye to them when you leave." He added

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this will become increasingly difficult to do over time but urged everyone to stay the course and expect it to go on for a long time like during the Vietnam War or Cold War. He added the events of 9/11 reminded us who our real heroes are.

The AFA has recently begun its annual membership campaign. Gen. John Jumper, Air Force Chief of Staff, in a recent letter to commanders encouraged support of the AFA. "AFA and its members have worked hard to strengthen the nation's defenses by actively promoting and furthering the interests of the U.S. Air Force for over 50 years," he said.

"In the 1970's, there was no survivor benefit program for the Reserve forces and the Air Force Association started the lobbying effort to get it into effect. It took an organization like the AFA to get it passed through Congress. The AFA Almanac magazine in May is something everyone in the Air Force should get. It tells you a lot about our Air Force," said Rucker. He added that just about anyone could join the AFA.

Anyone interested in joining the AFA, can contact Snodgrass at 963-2200, Joyce at 963-2295 or Fisher at 963-3612.

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